

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT	
Project Name: Installation of an underground fiber optic line and cellular tower site.	Proposed Implementation Date: Spring 2018
Proponent: Nemont Telephone Cooperative, Inc. PO Box 600, Scobey, MT 59263	
Type and Purpose of Action: The proponent proposes to install an underground fiber optic line within a right-of-way 20' wide (10' on either side of a centerline) across School Trust land in Daniels County. This line will be "knifed in" (entrenched using machinery that requires very little digging, usually a line about 12" wide at most). In conjunction with this line, a cellular tower site will be installed on the School Trust land. The line and tower will allow for improved telecommunication capabilities in this rural area and the surrounding communities.	
Location: W2W2 of Section 17, Township 36N, Range 47E	County: Daniels

I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT	
1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED: Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.	Tara Hicks, Right-of-Way Agent for Nemont, informed staff at the Glasgow Unit Office(GUO) of plans for this project, and shortly thereafter submitted the Right-of-Way application. GUO staff reviewed the application and discussed the project with Mrs. Hicks.
2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:	No other governmental agencies have jurisdiction over this project as it pertains to School Trust lands. Montana DNRC, Real Estate Management Bureau has jurisdiction over the project.
3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:	Action Alternative: Grant permission to Nemont Telephone Cooperative, Inc. to install the fiber optic line and cell tower on School Trust land. No Action Alternative: Deny permission to Nemont Telephone Cooperative, Inc. to install the fiber optic line and cell tower on School Trust land.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS
<p>4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are fragile, compatible or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?</p>	<p>The area of impact consists mostly of Turner sandy loams and Cabba-Cambert-Cherry silt loams, with 2 to 15% slopes. This soil is not fragile or unstable, and no unusual geologic features are present.</p> <p>Action Alternative: There will be temporary soil disturbance due to the digging (knifing) required to install the line underground, as well as the installation of the tower. The area of impact is mostly active cropland, where soil disturbance is typically part of the agricultural practices already. Slight soil compaction would occur due to temporarily increased vehicle use.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no changes to soils on the School Trust land.</p>
<p>5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality?</p>	<p>There are no important water resources present within the area of impact. There is no potential for impact on drinking water in the area.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The proposed project would not negatively impact the quality, quantity and distribution of water.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative, there will be no impacts to water quality, quantity and distribution.</p>
<p>6. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?</p>	<p>This project is not influenced by any air quality regulations or zones. A short-term increase in vehicle traffic will result in a slight increase in dust. No pollutants will be produced.</p> <p>Action Alternative: This type of</p>

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

	<p>project on the School Trust land will have minimal impact to the air quality. Some dust may occur due to vehicle use.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to air quality.</p>
<p>7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?</p>	<p>Most of the acreage impacted is used for dryland farming, with a wheat/fallow crop rotation. A small part of the area of impact consists of non-native grasses and annual forbs. No rare plants or cover types are present.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The fiber optic line would have no impact on the vegetative community due to the knifing process used to install the line. The vegetation would be destroyed permanently at the tower site.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to the plant communities on the School Trust land.</p>
<p>8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?</p>	<p>The School Trust land provides habitat for upland birds, antelope and deer. There is fair potential for recreation (hunting) on this tract, due to ease of access from the adjacent county road.</p> <p>Action Alternative: Installation of the cell tower will result in the loss of a small amount of habitat. Any impacts due to digging the line will be small and will be mitigated quickly with the return to normal farming practices.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to the possible use of the School Trust land as wildlife habitat.</p>
<p>9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR</p>	<p>The area of impact does not consist of</p>

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
<p>LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Sensitive Species or Species of special concern?</p>	<p>any sensitive or specially identified habitat. No wetlands are within the area of impact. No species of concern are listed as being present within the area of impact.</p> <p>Action Alternative: Installation of the cell tower will result in the loss of a small amount of habitat. Any impacts due to digging the line will be small and will be mitigated quickly with the return to normal farming practices.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to the environmental resources.</p>
<p>10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?</p>	<p>According to field evaluations carried out by GUO staff, the area of impact contains no historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The proposed project will have no impact on historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impact to historical or archaeological sites under this alternative.</p>
<p>11. AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?</p>	<p>The proposed project is directly adjacent to a county road, so the project will be easily visible to the public. The project is in a relatively sparsely-populated area.</p> <p>Action Alternative: A new structure (the tower) would be fairly prominent in the area. However, this will likely not degrade the aesthetic value of the area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to aesthetics associated with the School Trust land.</p>
<p>12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES</p>	<p>Environmental resources in the area</p>

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
<p>OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?</p>	<p>are not specifically limited and are not affected by the proposed project. No nearby activities will affect the project.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The proposed project will place no additional demands on any environmental resources in the area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no demands placed on environmental resources of land, water, air or energy.</p>
<p>13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?</p>	<p>There are currently no other studies, plans or projects on this tract.</p> <p>Action Alternative: This project will not impact any other plans or studies that Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation has on the School Trust land.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to the plans or studies that Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation has on the School Trust land.</p>

III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION	
RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
<p>14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?</p>	<p>The operation and movement of heavy equipment and vehicles has inherent risks that are not impacted by access across the School Trust land.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The installation of the cable would slightly increase the risk of fire during the project due to increased vehicle traffic.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts</p>

	to human health or safety.
<p>15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?</p>	<p>The area of impact is classified as agricultural and grazing acreage and is managed for dryland farming and livestock grazing activities.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The disturbance to vegetation on the tract is too small to have a measurable economic impact on the agricultural activities on this tract.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to agricultural activities on the School Trust land.</p>
<p>16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will not create nor impact any jobs in the area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to quantity and distribution of employment under this alternative.</p>
<p>17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will have no impacts on the local and state tax base and tax revenues.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the local and state tax base under this alternative.</p>
<p>18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will increase traffic along the nearby county road during the course of the project. There would be no additional demand for governmental services.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no additional demand for government services.</p>
<p>19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?</p>	<p>There are no special management plans in effect on the School Trust land. It is managed for typical agricultural activities (livestock grazing and dryland farming).</p> <p>Action Alternative: The project has</p>

	<p>cleared State (DNRC) management plans.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to locally adopted environmental plans and goals.</p>
<p>20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?</p>	<p>This tract is easily accessible from the adjacent county road, and this project would have no impact on that access.</p> <p>Action Alternative: No changes to public land access or recreational potential will occur.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the recreational values associated with the School Trust land under this alternative.</p>
<p>21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will not impact the density and distribution of population and housing.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the density and distribution of population and housing.</p>
<p>22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will enhance telecommunications capabilities for residents in the surrounding area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the social structures under this alternative.</p>
<p>23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will not impact the cultural uniqueness and diversity of this rural area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the cultural uniqueness and diversity under this alternative.</p>
<p>24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:</p>	<p>This telecommunications project is intended to provide greater telecommunication capabilities in the surrounding area/communities. This is</p>

a very rural area with limited capabilities currently.

Action Alternative: Allowing installation of the cable across School Trust land would have little economic impact to the School Trust, but would provide surrounding communities with increased telecommunications capabilities.

No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the social and economic circumstances under this alternative.

EA Checklist Prepared By: s/Jack Medicott Date: 2/20/2018
 Jack Medicott Land Use Specialist

IV. FINDING	
25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:	Action Alternative
26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:	No significant impacts expected.
27. Need for Further Environmental Analysis: <input type="checkbox"/> EIS <input type="checkbox"/> More Detailed EA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Further Analysis	

EA Checklist Approved By: Matthew Poole Glasgow Unit Manager
 Name Title

s/Matthew Poole\s Date: March 15, 2018
 Signature